

FORT MCCOY, BUILDING T-1551 (THEATER)  
(Camp McCoy, Building T-1551 (Theater))  
Fort McCoy  
Sparta vicinity  
Monroe County  
Wisconsin

HABS NO. WI-308-D

HABS  
WIS,  
41-SPARV,  
1-D-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### FORT MCCOY, BUILDING T-1551 (THEATER)

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Location: Building T-1551 is located approximately 100' West of South Headquarters Road, and 100' south of an unnamed road leading to the Base Main PX, in Block 15 of the cantonment of the Main Post of Fort McCoy, in Monroe County, Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup>

USGS Quadrangle Alderwood Lake, Wisconsin; 7.5 minute series 1983 (photorevised from 1978) UTM Coordinates: Zone 15 (1927 North American Datum) 4876280 N 685480 E

Present Owner: Department of the Army

Original Use: Theater with Dressing Room - 1038 seat

Present Use: Unused

Significance: Building T-1551 is significant as a relatively unmodified representative of a base theater. It represents one of four, type TH-1038-S theaters constructed at Fort McCoy in 1942.<sup>2</sup> Of these, the remaining three have undergone major alterations.<sup>3</sup> The structure is scheduled for demolition.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: Construction of Building T-1551 probably began in the summer of 1942. There is a minor discrepancy on the date of building completion. Notations on the "As Built" drawing 800-500 state that the building was completed by October 5, 1942,<sup>4</sup> however the Real Property Records note the building as completed on November 4, 1942.<sup>5</sup>
2. Architect: George E. Bergstrom, Chief of the Architectural Unit in the Engineering Branch of the Construction Division, Quartermaster Corps, supervised the 1941 revision of the 700 series theatre plans that produced the 800-500 series drawings in April 1941.<sup>6</sup>
3. Original and subsequent owners: The site for the expanded Camp McCoy military reservation was condemned and purchased by the War Department in the spring of 1942.<sup>7</sup> The owner from 1942-47 was the War Department. Since 1947, the U.S. Department of the Army, the successor to the War Department, has held title.

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4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Building T-1551 was part of construction area B at Fort McCoy. Bids for the construction of the cantonment were let in February 1942 and contracts were awarded in late March. The contracts for the seven principal construction areas were fixed-price in nature. The War Department purchased the lumber used in Building T-1551 and the rest of the cantonment in the spring of 1942. The remaining materials used in construction were apparently purchased by subcontractors in the Wisconsin area.<sup>8</sup>
5. Original Plans and Construction: Building T-1551 was built from 800 series plan number 800-500 and associated plan numbers 800-501, 800-502, 800-503, 800-504, 800-505, 800-506, 800-507, 800-508, 800-509, 800-510, 800-511, 800-512, 800-513, 800-514, 800-515, 800-145, 800-151, 800-157, 800-185, 800-186, 800-187, 800-190, and 800-199.<sup>9</sup> The original plans used to construct the four TH-1038-S theatres at the installation are currently on file in "As Built" envelope #88 in Building T-2111. The original cost of the building was \$72,000.<sup>10</sup> The only noted alteration to the original building plan at the time of construction is the use of concrete walls with steel reinforcement in the boiler room (in lieu of concrete block) and the use of plan 800-515 (Alternative Plan Providing Toilet Facilities for Colored Audience).<sup>11</sup>
6. Alterations and additions: On the exterior, the grayish white cement asbestos siding has been replaced in a few spots at low elevations with white siding of similar size. The exterior of the structure was repainted in 1957/1958 and 1965. The lobby was repainted in 1951 and the men's latrine was repainted in 1955. The building was re-roofed with a rolled bituminous system at an unknown date. Two covered entrances and ramps measuring 7'-4" x 13'-0" were added to the east and west walls in 1944.<sup>12</sup>

B. Historical Context:

The construction of Building T-1551 was part of a massive, nation-wide mobilization program designed to build cantonments in which to house and train the expanded World War II Army. The 800 series drawings, and the 700 series that preceded it, were a comprehensive set of drawings which could be used interchangeably in creating the various building types. Through the construction of temporary wood frame buildings, such as T-1551, the 1939 housing capacity of 200,000 persons was increased to 6,000,000 by the close of the mobilization program in the fall of 1944. In addition, the war mobilization buildings are significant for their construction and technological innovation. Techniques such as the standardization of plans, prefabrication of units and assembly-line approach to construction were largely pioneered in the construction of these mobilization structures.

Building T-1551 was one of four, TH-1038-S theatres constructed in the main cantonment area of the "New Camp McCoy", a mobilization cantonment built by

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the War Department between the entrance of the United States into World War II late in 1941 and early 1943.<sup>13</sup> The 1941-1943 cantonments were constructed to house and serve as training bases for approximately 525,000 men drafted for Army service after the declaration of war.<sup>14</sup> Two newly organized Army Divisions occupied Camp McCoy during their training. The Second Army Division arrived soon after the completion of construction in the fall of 1942 and remained until November 1943, leaving for action in the Italian Campaign. The 76th Division then took over, remaining until December 1944, when they departed for service in the Battle of the Bulge and the subsequent occupation of Germany. Troops for engineering, railhead, field artillery, tank destroyer, ordinance, and maintenance were also trained at Camp McCoy concurrently with the Second and 76th Divisions.<sup>15</sup> In 1944, Camp McCoy also became a personnel center for the Army, receiving and redirecting soldiers for new assignments. The following year, the personnel center also began to discharge veterans as the war came to a close. The personnel center closed in 1946, and most other functions of the camp halted a year later.<sup>16</sup>

After three years of relative inactivity, Camp McCoy was reactivated by the Defense Department for training of Regular, Reserve, and National Guard Units in the Fifth Army Area for service in the Korean War. Since 1953 the camp has become a center for training reserve units of the Army and National Guard Regiments of the Midwest Region.<sup>17</sup>

Building T-1551 was assigned to Special Services in January 1943 and remained under their control until June 1955 when it was assigned to the 438th Army Band. The structure was deactivated in 1969.<sup>18</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Building T-1551 is a well preserved and relatively unmodified example of the typical 800 series, TH-1038-S theater. It has a seating capacity of 1038 people. The high rectangular auditorium is abutted to the front by the lobby and the rear, by the dressing rooms. A tall rectangular chimney rises between the auditorium and dressing rooms. The clear span of the theater is achieved with a wooden Pratt truss with a shallow-pitched top chord. The length and size of the truss is the same as that used for the the Maintenance Shop, Building T-1463. On the basis of visual inspection and historical documentation, Building T-1551, while in generally poor condition, is one of the best preserved and least altered of the theaters at Fort McCoy.

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2. Condition of Fabric: The general condition of Building T-1551 is moderate to poor. Areas of deterioration noted in the structure's exterior include places where the original cement asbestos siding has fallen off and either been replaced or left bare and areas where the siding has been broken through for truss repair. The exterior paint is peeling, and some warping and wood rot was observed where the end grains of beams have been exposed to moisture. The roof truss for the structure was repaired in 1976 for cracks in five of the seven main roof trusses. In all, eighteen cracks in Truss No.'s 3,4,5,6 and 7 were repaired.<sup>19</sup>

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: Building T-1551 is rectangular in shape and measures approximately 169'-6" in length and 76'-1-1/2" in width. The height from grade to the roof ridge is approximately 25'-1-3/4".<sup>20</sup>
2. Foundations: Building T-1551 has a 1'-1" wide x 8" high reinforced-concrete strip footing with a 9" wide reinforced-concrete skirt. Steel rods, measuring 1/2", are used at 9" o.c. horizontally and 18" o.c. vertically for reinforcement in the skirt. 15" x 18" reinforced concrete piers transfer column loads to 5'-0" wide x 3'-6" long x 1'-4" deep reinforced concrete pad footing. The outside face of the piers is flush with the outside face of the skirting. The piers are reinforced with 6'-3/4" steel bars vertically and wrapped with 3/8" ties 12" o.c. placed 2" from each face. The pad footing is reinforced with 9'-1/2" bars each way placed 4" from the bottom.
3. Walls: The exterior walls consist of three layers: wooden sheathing nailed to stud framing, black construction paper, and cement asbestos siding measuring 11" x 24", the standard size used throughout the cantonment.
4. Structural System, framing: Building T-1551 is of light frame construction. The roof is supported by a wood Pratt truss with a top chord pitched at a 1 to 12 slope to the outside edge. The depth of the truss is approximately 6'-0" at the edge and 9'-1" at the center with a ten-panel division through the entire length. The bottom chord is composed of two 3" x 10" members and the top chord is composed of two 3" x 12" members. The vertical web members vary in size. Two 2" x 12" members complete the first panel, two 2" x 10" members complete the second, two 2" x 8" members the third, two 2" x 6" members the fourth and a 3/4" diameter steel rod in the center king-post position. The diagonal members vary in an analogous manner. All connections are made with 4" split rings fastened with 3/4" diameter bolts and 3" x 3/16" washers. Three 3" x 14" planks compose the vertical end member of the truss, transferring the loads to the foundation.
5. Porches stoops: The public entrance to Building T-1551 has a concrete stoop with a covered porch the same width as the auditorium. It contains two ticket booths publicly accessible from the exterior at opposing ends. Above this single-story

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porch, the form of the projection room is visible. A small covered entrance vestibule with double doors and a gabled roof protrudes from the single-story dressing room area. Each longitudinal side of the auditorium block has three openings, each with a different architectural treatment for the porch/stoop arrangement. The double doors at the rear of the auditorium open onto an uncovered concrete stoop with two steps down to grade. In the middle of the auditorium block, concrete steps rise from below grade covered by a wooden porch. This reflects the sloped floor of the auditorium which is below grade at this point. The direct outside entrance to the stage itself is through an independent enclosed vestibule.

6. Chimneys: The chimney is located within the boiler room and rises approximately 50'-0" above grade. It is located on the center longitudinal axis of the theater, in between the mass of the auditorium and the dressing rooms. The chimney is constructed of red-buff brick in a running bond with Portland cement mortar. The chimney exhausted fumes from the coal-burning furnace.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and Doors: At the north front of the building, there is a single four-light triple-recessed panel door used for entry in the theatre office, and a set of two, four-door entries, one in the building center and one to the west of center. The center entry has four, five-panel doors. The west entry has a set of four, four-light three-panel entries. At the west wall there is one double-door exit with two, five-panel doors, one enclosed exit with a double door composed of two, four-light three-panel doors, and one roofed exit with two, five-paneled doors. At the east wall there is one double-door exit with two, five-panel doors, one enclosed exit with a double door composed of two, four-light three-panel doors, and one roofed exit with two, five-panel doors. At the rear, there is a single enclosed entry with a double door composed of two, four-light three-panel doors.
  - b. Windows: On the first-floor front porch there is one, three-over-six-light double-hung window in the theatre office and one, three-over-six-light double-hung window in each ticket booth. The ticket booths have single-light fixed windows with circular cuts in the window center and semi-circular cuts at the bottom. On the second-story there are three, eight-light fixed windows with simple architrave. At the west and east walls there are two, six-panel double-hung windows at the rear of the building (dressing room and boiler room). At the rear, there are four, six-panel double-hung windows on the west side (dressing room) and one, six-panel double-hung window to the east of the boiler room.

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C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: There is no basement under Building T-1551. The crawl space is at grade.
- b. Main Floor: Building T-1551, as constructed in 1942, had a gross area of 13,417 square feet. There are seventeen rooms in the building; the foyer, the lobby, two ticket booths, an office, the auditorium, two dressing rooms with toilets, a men's toilet, a women's toilet, a utility room, prop room, rewind room, catwalk, fan room, projection room, and boiler room.
- c. Attic: The attic contains the catwalk and roof trusses.

- 2. Stairways: There are two wooden stairs descending from the side of the stage platform to the auditorium floor. There is a wooden stair from the lobby area to the projection room.
- 3. Flooring: The finished auditorium floor is poured concrete. The stage floor is a raised wooden platform. Lack of plans and electrical power to the buildings prevented a more detailed inspection.
- 4. Wall and Ceiling finishes: The interior finish material of the auditorium and lobby is painted mineral fiberboard nailed directly to the stud frame wall.
- 5. Openings: Walls on each side of the stage provide an off-stage preparation area and together work to form a proscenium for the stage platform.
- 6. Mechanical Equipment:
  - a. Heating: The structure was heated by a coal-fired steam boiler. Heat was dissipated via blowers, heating ducts and steam radiators. A Nash Engineering condensation pump and a Trane Blower unit were installed in the system in 1943 and a Winkler electric coal stoker was added in 1944.<sup>21</sup>
- 7. Original Furnishings: At the time of inspection, original bench seating was present. However, all benches had been placed in a pile near the rear of the auditorium.

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D. Site:

1. General Setting and orientation: Building T-1551 and the other buildings of Block 15 are arranged on a wedge-shaped rectangular pattern running generally south-southeast to north-northwest along its long axis. The building is south of the access road to the post Main PX and barber shop and immediately west of the South Headquarters Road, the main access to Fort McCoy.<sup>22</sup>
2. Historical Landscape Design: To the west of the building there is an asphalt parking lot. An asphalt and gravel sidewalk is located between the building and South Headquarters Road. The remainder of the building lot is relatively flat and planted in grass.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- A. Architectural Drawings: Building 1551 was built from 800 series plan number 800-500 and associated plan numbers 800-501, 800-502, 800-503, 800-504, 800-505, 800-506, 800-507, 800-508, 800-509, 800-510, 800-511, 800-512, 800-513, 800-514, 800-145, 800-151, 800-157, 800-185, 800-186, 800-187, 800-190, 800-199, 800-504, 800-515.<sup>23</sup> The original plans used to construct the four TH-1038-S theatres are currently on file in "As Built" envelope #88 in Building 2111 at Fort McCoy.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:
  - a. Standard Mobilization Drawings 800 Series Plan numbers 800-500\*, 800-501\*, 800-502\*, 800-503\*, 800-505\*, 800-506, 800-507, 800-508, 800-509, 800-510, 800-511, 800-512, 800-513, 800-514, 800-145, 800-151, 800-157, 800-185, 800-186, 800-187, 800-190, 800-199, 800-504, 800-515. (\* indicates these plans were modified at Ft. McCoy)
  - b. Office of the Area Engineer, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. "Camp McCoy Project -- General Layout Plan No. 6150-L, May 23, 1942.
  - c. Record Drawing file #88 in "As Built Files, Building T-2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
  - d. Real Property Record. Building and Structures, Building T-2145, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.



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2. Secondary and published sources:

"As Built" file # 88, Building T-2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin

Basic Information Map, Fort McCoy Wisconsin, General Site Map North Fort Sheet 3a of 13. Office of the Facilities Engineer, Bldg. 2160. Original January -11-1965; Revision #11 June-4-1976.

Buildings and Structures Descriptions, from box marked "Save Historical"; Building T-2145 (Meatlocker), Fort McCoy, Original typed entries, undated.

Equipment Records, from file marked "Equipment Records"; Building T-2145 (Meatlocker), Fort McCoy, Original typed entries, undated.

"Historical Summary", typescript summary of the history of Camp McCoy prepared by the Public Affairs Office, Fort McCoy n.d., ca.1985, p 6.

Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States*. [volume in the series, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services*] (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army) pp 349.

Office of the Area Engineer, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. "Camp McCoy Project--General Layout Plan No. 6150-1-L, May 23, 1942. Original blueline print in map file cabinet Building T-2145 "Meatlocker".

Post Engineer Office Historical Data, Document dated 15, January 1946, on file Building T-2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin

Real property records file; Building T-2160, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Also see original Real Property Record cards filebox in Building T-2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

"To Condemn 9600 acres for McCoy," *Sparta Herald*, February 9, 1942, p.1, c. 8.

Unmarked wooden File Box, Building T-2145, "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. File contains 4x5 cards listing buildings and assignees.

C. Likely Sources Not Investigated:

1. Documentary: Information on the firm charged with the construction of Building T-1551 may be available. Additional data may be available in the National Archives on George E. Bergstrom and the other architects who produced and revised the 800 series Standard Drawings.

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2. Oral History: Interviews could be conducted with personnel involved in the construction of the theatres at Fort McCoy and local informants who may have attended showings at the theatre may be found.

D. Supplemental Materials:

1. The original "As Built" drawings for Building T-1551 are filed in Building T-2111, at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. They would not duplicate and as such could not be included with the documentation. Standard plans for the 800 series TH-1038-S are available from the National Archives.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of Fort McCoy was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, chief, during the summer of 1988. The project was sponsored by the United States Army, Environmental Office, Colonel Ronald G. Kelsey, chief, with the assistance of Constance W. Ramirez, Historic Preservation Officer for the U.S. Army. Local sponsorship was provided at Fort McCoy by the base Commander, Colonel Sorensen, and by Al Balliett and Marvin Westenburg of the Environmental Division; John Calvert, Engineering Planning and Services Division; and Robert Wells, Real Property. The project was managed through the HABS/HAER WASO office by John A. Burns, architect, and project leader and Catherine Crawford, HABS historian. The documentation was undertaken at the HABS/HAER field office at Fort McCoy by James Glass, HABS/HAER, and by Keith Landreth, U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (USACERL), Champaign, Illinois. Large-format photography was done by Martin Stupich.

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NOTES:

1. Basic Information Map, Fort McCoy Wisconsin, General Site Map North Fort Sheet 3a of 13. Office of the Facilities Engineer, Bldg 2160. Original January -11-1965; Revision #11 June 4-1976.
2. Buildings and Structures Descriptions, from box marked "Save Historical"; Building 2145 (Meatlocker), Fort McCoy, Original typed entries, undated.
3. "As Built" file 4 88, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
4. Completion label appended to Record Drawing # 800-500. "As Built" envelope #88, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. All four (4) 1038S structures at Fort McCoy were built according to this record plan.
5. Real property records file; Building 2160, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Also see original Real Property Record cards filebox in Building 2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
6. Lenore Fine and Jesse A. Remington, *The Corps of Engineers: Construction in the United States [volume in the series, United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services]* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army) pp 349.
7. "To Condemn 9600 acres for McCoy," *Sparta Herald*, February 9, 1942, p.1, c. 8.
8. Office of the Area Engineer, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. "Camp McCoy Project--General Layout Plan No. 6150-1-L, May 23, 1942. Original blueline print in map file cabinet building 2145 "Meatlocker".
9. "As Built" file #88, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
10. Real Property Records, Building 2160, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
11. "As Built" file 088, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin 22.
12. Field Form # 103, Real Property Records, Building 2160, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
13. Post Engineer Office Historical Data, Document dated 15, January 1946, on file Building 2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
14. Diane Wasch and Perry Busch, (draft) History of the Design and Construction of Temporary World War II Buildings by the War Department. Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 1988 pp 42;47.
15. Post Engineer Office Historical Data, Document dated 15 January 1946, on file Building 2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
16. Ibid.
17. "Historical Summary", typescript summary of the history of Camp McCoy prepared by the Public Affairs Office, Fort McCoy n.d., ca.1985, p
18. Unmarked wooden File Box, building 2145, "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. File contains 4x5 cards listing buildings and assignees.

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19. Office of the Post Engineer, Truss Diagram - Truss Repair Bldg. 1551 in "As Built" file 088, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
20. Real Property Record Building 1046; Real property records office, Building 2160 Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
21. Box entitled "Equipment Records", building 2145 "Meatlocker", Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.
22. Basic Information Map, Fort McCoy Wisconsin, General Site Map North Fort Sheet 3a of 13. Office of the Facilities Engineer, Bldg 2160. Original January -11-1965; Revision #11 June-4-1976.
23. "As Built" file #88, Building 2111, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.